

NATIONAL RECORDER.

Containing Essays upon subjects connected with Political Economy, Science, Literature, &c.; Papers read before the Agricultural Society of Philadelphia; a Record of passing Events; Selections from Foreign Magazines, &c. &c.

PUBLISHED, EVERY SATURDAY, BY LITTELL & HENRY, 74 S. SECOND STREET, AT FIVE DOLLARS PER ANN.

VOL. V. Philadelphia, March 3, 1821. No. 9.

Miscellany.

MRS. HEMAN'S POEMS.

From the Quarterly Review, No. 47—now in press at Boston.

1. The Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy.
2. Tales and Historic Scenes, in Verse.
3. Translations from Camoens and other Poets, with Original Poems.
4. The Sceptic, a Poem.
5. Stanzas to the Memory of the late King.

BY FELICIA HEMANS.

This certainly is not the age in which those who speak slightly of female talent should expect to be listened to with much attention. In almost every department of literature, and in many of art and science, some one or other of our own contemporaries and countrywomen will be found, in spite of all the disadvantages of an imperfect education, occupying a respectable, at least, if not a prominent situation. And this remark, if true any where, is undoubtedly so when applied to poetry: No judicious critic will speak without respect of the tragedies of Miss Baillie, or the *Psyche* of Mr. Tighe; and unless we deceive ourselves greatly, the author of the poems before us requires only to be more generally known and read, to have her place assigned at no great distance from that of the two distinguished individuals just mentioned. Mrs. Hemans, indeed, if we may judge from her writings, is not merely a clever woman, but a woman of very general reading, and of a mind improved by reflection and study. There is another circumstance about these poems in which we cannot well be deceived, and which demands notice, the progressive and rapid improvement of them; not five years have elapsed from the appearance of the first to that of the last, and the difference of the two is very surprising; the merits of the one are little more than correct language, smooth versification, and chaste ideas; the last, written on a difficult subject, is one of the most able pro-

VOL. V.

ductions of the present day. The facility given by practice may have done much towards this; but when the improvement is principally in the richness and novelty of thought, careful study and diligent training of the reason must have borne a much larger share. If we may judge too of her, in another point from her writings, Mrs. Hemans is a woman in whom talent and learning have not produced the ill effects so often attributed to them; her faculties seem to sit meekly on her, at least we can trace no ill humour or affectation, no misanthropic gloom, no querulous discontent; she is always pure in thought and expression, cheerful, affectionate and pious. It is something at least to know, that whether the emotions she excites be always those of powerful delight or not, they will be at least harmless, and leave no sting behind: if our fancies are not always transported, our hearts at least will never be corrupted; we have not found a line which a delicate woman might blush to have written. When speaking of an English lady this ought to be no more than common praise, for delicacy of feeling has long been, and long may it be, the fair and valued boast of our countrywomen; but we have had too frequent reason of late to lament, both in female readers and writers, the display of qualities very opposite in their nature. Their tastes, at least, have not escaped the infection of that pretended liberality, but real licentiousness of thought, the plague and the fearful sign of the times. Under its influence they lose their relish for what is simple and sober, gentle or dignified, and require the stimulus of excessive or bitter passion, of sedition, of audacious profaneness. Certain we are, that the most dangerous writer of the present day finds his most numerous and most enthusiastic admirers among the fair sex; and we have many times seen very eloquent eyes kindle in vehement praise of the poems, which no woman should have read, and which it would have been far better for the world if the author had never written. This is a melancholy subject on which we have much

I

to say at a fit opportunity, but which it would not satisfy us to treat so cursorily as our present limits would render necessary: with Mrs. Hemans, at least, such thoughts as it suggests have no connexion, and we will not, therefore, any longer detain our readers with general remarks, but give them a brief account of her several poems, with such extracts and observations as may serve to justify what we have before advanced respecting the author. The earliest on the list is a poem on the Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy, and as we have intimated above, is decidedly inferior to all that follow it. We do not think the subject indeed, very happily chosen, except for a very short and spirited sketch: when treated of at so much length as by Mrs. Hemans, it was sure to lose all unity, and be broken up into a number of separate descriptions, which, even if very truly drawn and striking, when severally examined, can never form a complete whole. The versification, however, is always flowing, though the style wants clearness and compression.

The next volume, the "Tales and Historic Scenes," is a collection as the title imports, of narrative poems. Perhaps it was not upon consideration, that Mrs. Hemans passed from a poem of picture drawing and reflection, to the writing of tales; but if we were to prescribe to a young poet his *course* of practice, this would certainly be our advice. The luxuriance of a young fancy delights in description; and the quickness and inexperience of the same age, in passing judgments;—in the one richness, in the other antithesis and effect are too often more sought after than truth: the poem is written rapidly, and correctness but little attended to. But in narration more care must be taken; if the tale be fictitious, the conception and sustainment of the characters, the disposition of the facts, the relief of the soberer parts by description, reflection, or dialogue, form so many useful studies for a growing artist; if the tale be borrowed from history, a more delicate task is added to those just mentioned, in determining how far it may be necessary or safe to interweave the ornaments of fiction with the groundwork of truth, and in skilfully performing that difficult task. In both cases the mind is compelled to make a more sustained effort, and acquires thereby greater vigour, and a more practical readiness in the detail of the art.

The principal poem in this volume is the Abencerrage; it commemorates the cap-

ture of Granada by Ferdinand and Isabella, and attributes it in great measure to the revenge of Hamet, chief of the Abencerrages, who had been induced to turn his arms against his countrymen, the Moors, in order to procure the ruin of their king, the murderer of his father and brothers. During the siege he makes his way by night to the bower of Zayda, his beloved, the daughter of a rival and hated family; her character is very finely drawn, and she repels with firmness all the solicitations and prayers of the traitor to his country. The following lines form part of their dialogue; they are spirited and pathetic, but perfectly free from exaggeration.

"Oh, wert thou still what I once fondly deem'd

All that thy mien express'd, thy spirit seem'd,
My love had been devotion, till in death
Thy name had trembled on my latest breath.
But not the chief who leads a lawless band
To crush the altars of his native land;
The apostate son of heroes, whose disgrace
Hath stain'd the trophies of a glorious race;
Not *him* I lov'd—but one whose youthful name
Was pure and radiant in unsullied fame;
Hadst thou but died, ere yet dishonour's cloud
O'er that young name had gather'd as a shroud,
I then had mourn'd thee proudly—and my grief
In its own loftiness had found relief,
A noble sorrow cherish'd to the last,
When ev'ry meaner woe had long been past.
Yes, let affection weep—no common tear
She sheds when bending o'er a hero's bier;
Let nature mourn the dead—a grief like this,
To pangs that rend *my* bosom, had been bliss."

The next volume in order consists principally of translations. It will give our readers some idea of Mrs. Heman's acquaintance with books, to enumerate the authors from whom she has chosen her subjects; they are Camoens, Metastasio, Filicaja, Pastorini, Lope de Vega, Francisco Manuel, Della Casa, Cornelio Bentivoglio, Quevedo, Juan de Tarsis, Torqueto and Bernado Tasso, Patrarca, Pietro Bembo, Lorenzini, Gessner, Chaulieu, Garcilaso de Vega; names embracing almost every language in which the muse has found a tongue in Europe. Many of these translations are very pretty, but it would be less interesting to select any of them for citation, as our readers might not be possessed of, or acquainted with the originals. We will pass on, therefore, to the latter part of the volume, which contains much that is very pleasing and beautiful. The poem which we are about to transcribe, is on a subject often treated; and no wonder: it would be hard to find another which embraces so many of the elements of poetic feeling; so soothing a mixture of

pleasing melancholy and pensive hope; such an assemblage of the ideas of tender beauty, of artless playfulness, of spotless purity, of transient yet imperishable brightness, of affections wounded, yet not in bitterness, of sorrows gently subdued, of eternal and undoubted happiness. We know so little of the heart of man, that when we stand by the grave of him whom we deem most excellent, the thought of death will be mingled with some awe and uncertainty; but the gracious promises of scripture leave no doubt as to the blessedness of departed infants, and when we think what they now are, and what they might have been; what they now enjoy, and what they might have suffered; what they have now gained, and what they might have lost; we may, indeed, yearn to follow them; but we must be selfish, indeed, to wish them constrained to dwell in these tenements of pain and sorrow. The dirge of a child, which follows, embodies these thoughts and feelings, but in more beautiful order and language.

"No bitter tears for thee be shed,
Blossom of being! seen and gone!
With flowers alone we strew thy bed,
O blest departed one!
Whose all of life, a rosy ray,
Blush'd into dawn, and pass'd away.
Yes thou art gone, ere guilt had power
To stain thy cherub soul and form!
Clos'd is the soft ephemeral flower
That never felt a storm!
The sunbeam's smile, the zephyr's breath,
All that it knew from birth to death.
Thou wert so like a form of light,
That heaven benignly call'd thee hence,
Ere yet the world could breathe one blight
O'er thy sweet innocence:
And thou that brighter home to bless
Art pass'd with all thy loveliness.
Oh hadst thou still on earth remained,
Vision of beauty, fair as brief,
How soon thy brightness had been stained
With passion, or with grief!
Now not a sullyng breath can rise
To dim thy glory in the skies.
We rear no marble o'er thy tomb,
No sculptur'd image there shall mourn,
Ah! fitter far the vernal bloom
Such dwelling to adorn.
Fragrance and flow'rs and dews must be
The only emblems meet for thee.
Thy grave shall be a blessed shrine,
Adorn'd with nature's brightest wreath,
Each glowing season shall combine
Its incense there to breathe;
And oft upon the midnight air
Shall viewless harps be murmuring there.
And oh! sometimes in vision blest,
Sweet spirit visit our repose,
And bear from thine own world of rest
Some balm for human woes.

What form more lovely could be given
Than thine to messenger of heaven."

Had Mrs. Hemans stopped here she might have claimed a considerable share of praise for elegant composition; but her two last publications are works of a higher stamp—works, indeed, of which no living poet need to be ashamed. The first of these is entitled the *Sceptic*, and is devoted, as our readers will easily anticipate, to advocating the cause of religion. Undoubtedly the poem must have owed its being to the circumstances of the times, to a laudable indignation at the course which literature in many departments seemed lately to be taking in this country, and at the doctrines disseminated with industry, principally (but by no means exclusively, as has been falsely supposed,) among the lower orders. Mrs. Hemans, however, does not attempt to reason learnedly or laboriously in verse; few poems, ostensibly philosophical, or didactic, have ever been of use, except to display the ingenuity and talent of the writers; people are not often taught a science or an art in poetry, and much less will an infidel be converted by a theological treatise in verse. But the argument of the *Sceptic* is one of irresistible force to confirm a wavering mind; it is simply resting the truth of religion on the necessity of it, on the utter misery and helplessness of man without it. This argument is in itself available for all the purposes of poetry; it appeals to the imagination and passions of man, it is capable of interesting all our affectionate hopes and charities, of acting upon all our natural fears. Mrs. Hemans has gone through this range with great feeling and ability, and when she comes to the mind that has clothed itself in its own strength, and relying proudly on that alone in the hour of affliction, has sunk into distraction in the contest, she rises into a strain of moral poetry not often surpassed.

"Oh what is nature's strength? the vacant eye
By mind deserted hath a dread reply,
The wild delirious laughter of despair,
The mirth of phrensy—seek an answer there!
Turn not away, though pity's cheek grow pale,
Close not thine ear against their awful tale.
They tell thee, reason wandering from the ray
Of faith, the blazing pillar of her way,
In the mid-darkness of the stormy wave
Forsook the struggling soul she could not save.
Weep not, sad moralist, o'er desert plains
Strew'd with the wrecks of grandeur—moulder-
ing fanes,
Arches of triumph—long with weeds o'er-
grown—
And regal cities—now the serpent's own:
Earth has more awful ruins—one lost mind

Whose star is quenched, hath lessons for mankind
Of deeper import, than each prostrate dome
Mingling its marble with the dust of Rome."

After a few more lines to this effect, she addresses the maniac himself in a passage almost too long for citation, yet which we cannot deny ourselves the pleasure of transcribing.

"Spirit dethron'd and check'd in mid career,
Son of the morning exil'd from thy sphere,
Tell us thy tale! perchance thy race was run
With science in the chariot of the sun:
Free as the winds the path of space to sweep,
Traverse the untrodden kingdoms of the deep,
And search the laws that nature's springs control;
There tracing all—save Him who guides the whole.

Haply thine eye its ardent glance had cast
Through the dim shades, the portals of the past;
By the bright lamp of thought thy care had fed
From the far beacon-lights of ages fled,
The depths of time exploring, to retrace
The glorious march of many a vanish'd race.

Or did thy power pervade the living lyre,
Till its deep chords became instinct with fire,
Silenc'd all meaner notes, and swell'd on high
Full and alone their mighty harmony,
While woke each passion from its all profound
And nations started at th' electric sound?
Lord of the ascendant! What avails it now,
Though bright the laurels wav'd upon thy brow?
What though thy name, through distant empires heard,

Bade the heart bound, as doth a battle word?
Was it for *this* thy still unwearied eye
Kept vigil with the watch-fires of the sky,
To make the secrets of all ages thine,
And commune with majestic thoughts that shine
O'er time's long shadowy pathway? Hath thy mind

Sever'd its lone dominions from mankind
For *this*—to woo their homage! Thou hast sought

All—save the wisdom with salvation fraught—
Won ev'ry wreath, but that which will not die,
Nor aught neglected save eternity.

And did all fail thee, &c.

* * * * *
Lift the dread veil no further! hide, oh hide
The bleeding form, the couch of suicide—
The dagger grasp'd in death—the brow, the eye
Lifeless, yet stamp'd with rage and agony;
The soul's dark traces left in many a line
Grav'd on *his* mien who died "and made no sign!"

Approach not, gaze not, lest thy fever'd brain
Too deep that image of despair retain.
Angels of slumber!—o'er the midnight hour
Let not such visions claim unhallow'd power,
Lest the mind sink with terror, and above,
See but the Avenger's arm, forget the Atoner's love."

We must venture upon one extract more.
It is from a part of the poem in which the writer is supplicating for the aids which heaven alone can bestow to sustain her at

the hour of death; and she naturally and truly asserts that that hour is most awful and distressing to unsupported nature.

"——— in the pride
Of youth and health, by sufferings yet untried,
We talk of death, as something which 'twere sweet

In glory's arms exultingly to meet;
A closing triumph, a majestic scene,
Where gazing nations watch the hero's mien,
As, undismay'd amidst the tears of all,
He folds his mantle, regally to fall.
Hush, fond enthusiast! still obscure and lone,
Yet not less terrible because unknown,
Is the last hour of thousands—they retire
From life's throng'd path, unnoticed to expire.
As the light leaf, whose fall to ruin bears
Some trembling insect's little world of cares,
Descends in silence, while around waves on
The mighty forest, reckless what is gone!
Such is man's doom, and ere an hour be flown,
Start not, thou trifler, such may be thine own!"

The last poem is to the memory of his late Majesty: unlike courtly themes in general, this is one of the deepest and most lasting interest. Buried as the king had long been in mental and visual darkness, and dead to the common joys of the world, his death, perhaps, did not occasion the shock, or the piercing sorrow which we have felt on some other public losses; but the heart must be cold indeed that could, on reflection, regard the whole fortune and fate of that venerable, gallant, tender heart-ed and pious man, without a more than common sympathy. There was something in his character so truly national; his very errors were of so amiable a kind, his excellencies bore so high a stamp, his nature was so genuine and unsophisticated, he stood in his splendid court amidst his large and fine family, so true a husband, so good a father, so safe an example; he so thoroughly understood the failings, and so, duly appreciated the virtues, even the uncourtly virtues of his subjects; and, with all this, the sorrows from heaven rained down upon his head in so 'pitiless and pelting a storm:' all these—his high qualities and unparalleled sufferings form such a subject for poetry, as nothing, we should imagine, but its difficulty and the expectation attending it, would prevent from being seized upon by the greatest poets of the day. We will not say that Mrs. Hemans has filled the whole canvas as it might have been filled, but unquestionably her poem is beyond all comparison with any which we have seen on the subject; it is full of fine and pathetic passages, and it leads us up through all the dismal colourings of the foreground, to that high and consoling prospect, which should close every Christian's reflection

upon such a matter. An analysis of so short a poem is wholly unnecessary, and we have already transgressed our limits; we will, therefore, give but one extract of that soothing nature alluded to, and release our readers.

"Yet was there mercy still—if joy no more
Within that blasted circle might intrude,
Earth had no grief whose footstep might pass
o'er

The silent limits of its solitude!

If all unheard the bridal song awoke
Our heart's full echoes as it swell'd on high,
Alike unheard the sudden dirge, that broke
On the glad strain, with dread solemnity.
If the land's rose unheeded wore its bloom,
Alike unfelt the storm, that swept it to the tomb.

And she, who tried through all the stormy past,
Severely, deeply prov'd, in many an hour,
Watch'd o'er thee firm and faithful to the last,
Sustain'd, inspired by strong affection's power;
If to thy soul her voice no music bore,

If thy clos'd eye and wandering spirit caught
No light from looks, that fondly would explore
Thy mien, for traces of responsive thought;
Oh thou wert spared the pang that would have
thrilled

Thine inmost heart, when death that anxious
bosom still'd.

Thy lov'd ones fell around thee—manhood's
prime,

Youth, with its glory, in its fullness, age,
All at the gates of their eternal clime
Lay down and clos'd their mortal pilgrimage;
The land wore ashes for its perish'd flowers,
The grave's imperial harvest. Thou, mean-
while,

Didst walk unconscious thro' thy royal towers,
The one that wept not in the tearful isle!

As a tired warrior, on his battle-plain,
Breathes deep in dreams amidst the mourners
and the slain.

And who can tell what visions might be thine?
The stream of thought, though broken, still
was pure!

Still o'er that wave the stars of heaven might
shine,

Where earthly image would no more endure!
'Tho' many a step of once familiar sound,
Came as a stranger's o'er thy closing ear,
And voices breathed forgotten tones around,
Which that paternal heart once thrilled to
hear,

The mind hath senses of its own and powers
To people boundless worlds, in its most wander-
ing hours.

Nor might the phantoms to thy spirit known,
Be dark or wild creations of remorse;
Unstain'd by thee, the blameless past had thrown
No fearful shadows o'er the future's course;
For thee no cloud from memory's dread abyss,
Might shape such forms as haunt the tyrant's
eye;

And closing up each avenue of bliss,
Murmur their summons, to "despair and die!"
No! e'en tho' joy depart, though reason cease,
Still virtue's ruined home is redolent of peace.

They might be with thee still—the loved, the
tried,

The fair, the lost, they might be with thee
still!

More softly seen in radiance purified
From each dim vapour of terrestrial ill;
Long after earth received them, and the note
Of the last requiem o'er their dust was poured,
As passing sunbeams, o'er thy soul might float
Those forms from us withdrawn, to thee re-
stored!

Spirits of holiness, in light revealed,
To commune with a mind, whose source of tears
was sealed."

It is time to close this article. Our read-
ers will have seen, and we do not deny,
that we have been much interested by our
subject: who or what Mrs. Hemans is, we
know not; we have been told that, like a
poet of antiquity,

Tristia vitæ

Solatur cantu

if it be so (and the most sensible breasts
are not uncommonly nor unnaturally the
most bitterly wounded) she seems from
the tenor of her writings to bear about her
a higher and a surer balsam than the praises
of men, or even the 'sacred muse' herself
can impart. Still there is a pleasure, an
innocent and an honest pleasure, even to a
wounded spirit, in fame fairly earned; and
such fame as may wait upon our decision,
we freely and conscientiously bestow: in
our opinion all her poems are elegant and
pure in thought and language; her later
poems are of higher promise, they are vi-
gorous, picturesque, and pathetic.

CHALMERS' COMMERCIAL SERMONS.

Extract from a Review in Blackwood's Edin-
burgh Magazine.

We know no fact, which, viewed in all
its relations, speaks more highly in favour
of the spirit of the present day, than the
great popularity of Dr. Chalmers. Much
has already been written about him in this
journal, and that by many different hands
—but we feel, on looking over all that has
been said, as if it were quite feeble and
ineffectual, when compared with the real
sense of his merits, that is spread widely,
and we would hope, fixed deeply, over the
whole healthy and right thinking mass of
the people. He has been eulogized abun-
dantly for the fervour of his impassioned
eloquence, and the dignified sweep of his
illustration, and the enlightened wisdom
of his remarks on the character and condi-
tion of the times in which he lives; but we
feel as if no adequate tribute of admiration
has ever yet been paid in these, or in any
other pages, to that rare spirit of Christian

self denial, which has been, and is every day exemplified in the uses to which, animated at once by a noble humility and an honest pride, this good and great man has thought fit to devote his powers of thought and language. There can be no doubt, that, taking oratory in the highest of its acceptations, he is the greatest of all living orators. At the bar—in the senate—(perhaps even in the church)—it may be possible to find men possessed of much more brilliancy, both of fancy and expression; and, we have no doubt, hundreds may be found far superior to him, in all the elegancies of composition, style, and delivery; but there is a certain *directness* of understanding—a certain clear thorough-going honesty of thought—a plain weight of power—and a simple consciousness of power about Dr. Chalmers, that are a thousand times more than enough to set him triumphantly over the heads of all the living speakers in the land. Perhaps, since Charles Fox died, Great Britain cannot be said to have exhibited one genuine natural orator, in any one department, except this mighty preacher. And yet, it is not the power of the man, but the purpose of the man, that stamps his mind with its truest character of greatness.

His greatest excellence, as a preacher of Christianity, is, in one word, his total want of flattery—his perfect scorn of all those arts by which most popular preachers seek and obtain their popularity. He is, at once, the most evangelical and the most practical of sermon writers—and this alone, if the matter be looked narrowly into, is sufficient to justify all that has been—all that can be said in his praise. No sensible man will ever dare, after reading his works, to use the word *evangelical* in a contemptuous sense; he has, for ever, done away the reproach of being a *Calvinist*. He is a bold original thinker—a profound metaphysician—and a most accomplished master of declamation—and, being such, he might *easily* have raised himself to a high pitch of estimation in the church, without giving up, as he has done, all the vulgar appliances of ecclesiastical success—without despising the prejudices of both the great divisions of Christian hearers alike—and so, without encountering any one of the difficulties of that adventurous, and, in some eyes at least we fear, invidious career, to which he has devoted himself. But such were not the views likely to sway the mind of such a man as Dr. Chalmers. In spite of the sneers with which his first splendid appearances were

received by the leaders of both the ecclesiastical parties in Scotland, he went on rejoicing in his course; and the result has been, that while neither of these parties dare to claim him for its own—either of them would be too proud to enlist him almost at any price in its ranks. He stands, as it is, entirely by himself—a noble example of what the true minister of Christianity ought to be—totally unfettered by any trammels of party feeling, civil or ecclesiastical—the unwearied deviser of good, slowly but surely witnessing the triumph of all that he devises—without suspicion of servility, or semblance of *self seeking*, the upright, unshaken, indefatigable advocate of every thing that tends to dignify the high, and to ennoble the low; labouring from hour to hour, and from day to day, to make men perceive wherein the true secret of all the calamities of the times consists—and to repair and replenish from at once the simplest and the loftiest of sources, all the decayed channels of sober, wise, and rational loyalty, among the unhappily estranged and alienated feelings of a once virtuous, devout, and patriotic population.

The close adaptation of all that he says and writes, to the actual condition of the people he is addressing, and the circumstances of the times in which he lives, forms one most remarkable peculiarity of the works of Dr. Chalmers—and accounts, of itself, in a great measure, for the elevation to which he has attained in the public opinion. It is not, that he is singular in the wish to adapt himself, in this manner, to the necessities of his auditors and readers. Hundreds, we might say thousands, of excellent, and of able men, are scattered throughout the land, and animated with the same honourable desire; and who shall doubt, that success has been, and is, from day to day, granted to their labours? But none of those that have published sermons of late appear to us to have entered upon this part of the task with any thing like the same felicity, whether of view or of execution, as Dr. Chalmers. We look in vain among the religious publications of the day for any thing like that certain mastery of glance, by which he appears to scrutinize all the moving surfaces of external things around him—that boldness with which he brings the great doctrines of the Bible into close contact with every manifestation of the spirit of the age—from the fine built theories of the would-be philosopher, down to the wild, coarse raving of the mechanic reformer—that noble confidence which makes him seek and find, on

every occasion, one sure remedy for every evil "sign"—and having found, to proclaim it—in one word, finally, that clear and distinct "application of Christianity to the ordinary affairs of life," in which the principal merit of Dr. Chalmers' sermons and other religious writings consists; and from which, we have no doubt, their principal usefulness is derived.

We have already had frequent occasion to take notice of his quarterly publications "on the Christian and civic economy of great towns," and of the beautiful speculations therein laid before the public, concerning the best, or rather only, means of repairing the present alarming deficiency of every sort of education among the crowded population of such cities as that in which he resides. The present volume of sermons may be considered, in one point of view, as a part of the same work; for it is easy to see that it has originated in the same course of study and reflection—study close and searching of every species of that commercial character by which he is surrounded—and reflection deep and sincere, concerning the means of improving that character, alike in its higher and its lower walks of exhibition. We observe that this author has already been attacked by the various oracles of the mob,* on account of the zeal with which he preaches to the humble in condition the necessity of civil government, and the duty of loyal obedience to the constitution and administration of the country—doctrines on which, most surely, no preacher ever commented in a manner more free from all guile and semblance of courtly adulation, or mean servility of purpose, than Dr. Chalmers. We know not what misrepresentations may be given of this volume also by the same dealers in calumny—men whose hatred of such a man as this, is of course in exact proportion to their sense of his power and fear of his zeal. It will be evident to all who bring honest minds to the investigation, that the plain simple purpose of the book is chiefly to do good to the lower orders of society, by reminding the higher of their much neglected duties towards them—to enforce the great obligation of good example—and to show how easily and how naturally the trifling faults (as they are courteously denominated) of the rich may be converted by the poor into covering, and precedent, and apology, for

their own coarser and more obviously and immediately pernicious offences. But as the whole strain of his arguments has the same tendency at least to promote that good against which the foul passions of these "false prophets" are enlisted, there need be little wonder if they should discover some pretence on which to display the usual allowance of bitterness and rancour, and all dishonest uncharitableness.

The truth, indeed, is, that by far the most powerful part of the volume is that which appears to have been most immediately dictated by the author's own observation of the effect which the loose and idle declamations of the disloyal press have produced upon the spirit of the lower orders in his neighbourhood; the absurd ideas which these idle declamations have engendered respecting the relative situations and obligations of the different classes of society; and the wild and visionary notions they have spread concerning the possibility of abating the necessary evils of life by any other means than those of individual industry, honesty, patience and honourable pride. The discourse on the great Christian law of reciprocity between man and man—"whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye unto them"—seems to us to be the most masterly specimen of reasoning and illustration in the whole book. He compares the operation of this law, as rightly interpreted, to that of a governor or fly in mechanism—that happy contrivance, by which all that is defective or excessive in the motion is confined within the limits of equality, and every tendency in any particular quarter to mischievous acceleration is coerced and restrained. Nor can any illustration be more just or happy. The ultimate evil effects of the ungenerous conduct of rich men on the interests of society at large, and therefore on their own interests, are displayed in a manner equally original and beautiful; and he then proceeds to treat the other side of the question in a way that shows no less knowledge of human nature as it actually exists, than sense of that in which its true dignity ought ever to lie.

"We have no conception whatever, that, even in millennial days, the diversities of wealth and station will at length be equalized. On looking forward to the time when kings shall be the nursing fathers, and queens the nursing mothers of our church, we think that we can behold the perspective of as varied a distribution of place and property as before. In the pilgrimage of life, there will still be the moving procession of the few charioted in splendour on

* Statesman, Examiner, Black Dwarf, Scotsman, &c.

the highway, and the many pacing by their side along the line of the same journey. There will, perhaps, be a somewhat more elevated footpath for the crowd; and there will be an air of greater comfort and sufficiency amongst them, and the respectability of evident worth and goodness will sit upon the countenance of this general population. But, bating these, we look for no great change in the external aspect of society. It will only be a moral and a spiritual change. Kings will retain their sceptres, and nobles their coronets; but, as they float in magnificence along, will they look with benignant feeling on the humble wayfarers; and the honest salutations of regard and reverence will arise to them back again; and, should any weary passenger be ready to sink unfriended on his career, will he, at one time, be borne onwards by his fellows on the pathway, and, at another, will a shower of beneficence be made to descend from the crested equipage that overtakes him. It is Utopianism to think, that, in the ages of our world which are yet to come, the outward distinctions of life will not all be upholden. But it is not Utopianism, it is Prophecy to aver, that the breath of a new spirit will go abroad over the great family of mankind—so, that while, to the end of time, there shall be the high and the low in every passing generation, will the charity of kindred feelings, and of a common understanding, create a fellowship between them on their way, till they reach that heaven where human love shall be perfected, and all human greatness is unknown.”

But we must return to Dr. Chalmers—and we think we cannot do better than select some of those specimens of his best style, which may be found in the discourses addressed more immediately to the other great class of hearers—the superiors, the natural superiors, but no less surely the natural guides, guardians, and benefactors of the poor. He has been speaking more generally of the immense variety of ways in which the example of the higher orders acts, so as to vitiate the moral feelings of their dependants, and, pointing with a steady finger to the evils which these in their turn have good cause to apprehend, from those whose moral feelings have, more or less, by their own neglect, or contempt, or carelessness of these feelings, become highly vitiated and depraved. On one or two specific offences of this sort, he then proceeds to dwell at great length, and with an earnestness which springs, we have good occasion to know, from direct observation of some of the most alarming symptoms by which the bad spirit of the region wherein the doctor resides, has of late been widely and openly exhibited.

“Another and still more specific offence is beginning, we understand, to be exemplified in our own city, though it has not attained to the height or to the frequency at which it occurs in a neighbouring metropolis. We allude to the

doing of week day business upon the Sabbath. We allude to that violence which is rudely offered to the feelings and the associations of sacredness, by those exactions that an ungodly master lays at times on his youthful dependants—when those hours which they were wont to spend in church, they are called upon to spend in the counting-house—when that day, which ought to be a day of piety, is turned into a day of posting and of penmanship—when the rules of the decalogue are set aside, and utterly superseded by the rules of the great trading establishment; and every thing is made to give way to the hurrying emergency of orders, and clearances, and the demands of instant correspondence. Such is the magnitude of this stumbling block, that many is the young man who has here fallen to rise no more—that, at this point of departure, he has so widened his distance from God, as never, in fact, to return to him—that, in this distressing contest between principle and necessity, the final blow has been given to his religious principles—that the master whom he serves, and under whom he earns his provision for time, has here wrested the whole interest of his eternity away from him—that, from this moment, there gathers upon his soul the complexion of a hardier and more determined impiety—and conscience once stifled, now speaks to him with a feebler voice—and the world obtains a firmer lodgment in his heart—and, renouncing all his original tenderness about Sabbath, and Sabbath employments, he can now, with thorough unconcern of a fixed and familiarized proselyte, keep equal pace by his fellows throughout every scene of profanation—and he who was wont to tremble and recoil from the freedoms of irreligion with the sensibility of a little one, may soon become the most daringly rebellious of them all—and that Sabbath which he has now learned, at one time, to give to business, he, at another, gives to unhallowed enjoyments—and it is turned into a day of visits and excursions, given up to pleasure, and enlivened by all the mirth and extravagance of holiday—and, when sacrament is proclaimed from the city pulpits, he, the apt, the well trained disciple of his corrupt and corrupting superior, is the readiest to plan the amusements of the coming opportunity, and among the very foremost in the ranks of emigration—and though he may look back, at times, to the Sabbath of his father’s pious house, yet the retrospect is always becoming dimmer, and at length it ceases to disturb him—and thus the alienation widens every year, till, wholly given over to impiety, he lives without God in the world.”

“And were we asked to state the dimensions of that iniquity which stalks regardlessly, and at large, over the ruin of youthful principles—were we asked to find a place in the catalogue of guilt for a crime, the atrocity of which is only equalled, we understand, by its frequency—were we called to characterize the man who, so far from attempting one counteracting influence against the profligacy of his dependants, issues, from the chair of authority on which he sits, a commandment, in the direct face of a commandment from God—the man who has chartered impiety in articles of agreement, and has vested himself with a property in that time which only belongs to the Lord of the Sabbath—were we

asked to look to the man who could thus overbear the last remnants of remorse in a struggling and unpractised bosom, and glitter in all the ensigns of a prosperity that is reared on the violated consciences of those who are beneath him—O! were the question put, to whom shall we liken such a man? or, what is the likeness to which we can compare him? we would say, that the guilt of him who trafficked on the highway, or trafficked on that outraged coast, from whose weeping families children were inseparably torn, was far outmeasured by the guilt which could thus frustrate a father's fondest prayers, and trample under foot the hopes and the preparations of eternity.

"There is another way whereby, in the employ of a careless and unprincipled master, it is impossible but that offences must come. You know just as well as we do, that there are chicaneries in business; and, so long as we forbear stating the precise extent of them, there is not an individual among you, who has a title to construe the assertion into an affronting charge of criminalty against himself. But you surely know, as well as we, that the mercantile profession, conducted, as it often is, with the purest integrity, and laying no resistless necessity whatever for the surrender of principle on any of its members; and dignified by some of the noblest exhibitions of untainted honour, and devoted friendship, and magnificent generosity, that have ever been recorded of our nature;—you know as well as we, that it was utterly extravagant, and in the face of all observation to affirm, that each, and every one of its numerous competitors, stood clearly and totally exempted from the sins of all undue selfishness. And, accordingly, there are certain commodious falsehoods occasionally practised in this department of human affairs. There are, for example, certain dextrous and gainful evasions, whereby the payers of tribute are enabled, at times, to make their escape from the eagle eye of the exactors of tribute. There are even certain contests of ingenuity between individual traders, where, in the higgling of a very keen and anxious negotiation, each of them is tempted, in talking of offers and prices, and the reports of fluctuations in home and foreign markets, to say the things which are not. You must assuredly know, that these, and such as these, then, have introduced a certain quantity of what may be called shuffling, into the communications of the trading world—insomuch, that the simplicity of yea, yea, and nay, nay, is in some degree exploded; and there is a kind of understood toleration established for certain modes of expression, which could not, we are much afraid, stand the rigid scrutiny of the great day; and there is an abatement of confidence between man and man, implying, we doubt, such a proportionate abatement of truth, as goes to extend most fearfully the condemnation that is due to all liars, who shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. And who can compute the effect of all this on the young and yet unpractised observer? Who does not see, that it must go to reduce the tone of his principles; and to involve him in many a delicate struggle between the morality he has learned from his catechism, and the morality he sees in a counting-house; and to obliterate, in his mind, the distinctions between right and wrong;

and, at length, to reconcile his conscience to a sin which, like every other, deserves the wrath and the curse of God; and to make him tamper with a direct commandment, in such a way, as that falsehoods and frauds might be nothing more in his estimation, than the peccadilloes of an innocent compliance with the current practices and moralities of the world! Here, then, is a point, at which the way of those who conform to this world, diverges from the way of those peculiar people who are redeemed from all iniquity, and are thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Here is a grievous occasion to fall. Here is a competition between the service of God and the service of Mammon. Here is the exhibition of another offence, and the bringing forward of another temptation, to those who are entering on the business of the world, little adverted to, we fear, by those who live in utter carelessness of their own souls, and never spend a thought or a sigh about the immortality of others—but most distinctly singled out by the text as a crime of foremost magnitude in the eye of Him who judgeth righteously."

Such are the general views of this book, which cannot fail to increase, great as it has long been, the fame of Dr. Chalmers.

REMARKS ON "MELMOTH."*

From the New Monthly Magazine.

This is the most daring, wild and powerful of all the romances of its author. Its groundwork is more awful—its incidents more terrific—and its intrusions on the sanctities of nature more frequent and more startling, than those which have astounded us in his *Montorio*, *Women*, or the *Milesian*. It gives us a higher idea of his powers, and a deeper regret for the uses to which they are often devoted. Its merit is not in the idea, which is compounded from the *St. Leon* of Godwin, and the infernal machinery of Lewis—nor in the plot, which is ill constructed—nor in the characters, which are for the most part impossible—but in the marvellous execution of particular scenes, and in thickly clustered felicities of expression, which are spread luminously over the darkness of its tenor, like fireflies on a tropical ocean.

The tale is professedly, and we doubt not sincerely, written with a moral and even religious purpose. Its author informs us in his preface, that its hint was taken from the following passage in one of his own sermons—"At this moment is there one of us present, however we may have departed from the Lord, disobeyed his will,

* *Melmoth, the Wanderer*: a tale, by the Author of *Bertram*, &c.—Printed in Edinburgh and London, 1820, and now republished in Boston, by Wells & Lilly, and for sale in Philadelphia by Littell & Henry.

and disregarded his word—is there one of us who would, at this moment, accept all that man could bestow, or earth afford, to resign his salvation? No, there is not one, not such a fool on earth, were the enemy of mankind to traverse it with the offer! This idea is developed by the story of a being once human, but thrall'd by alliance with the “king of fiends,” who, after death, is permitted to traverse the world in his old form of flesh and blood, with supernatural powers, that may tempt men at their utmost need to purchase immediate relief, on condition of eternal torture. He accumulates on his intended victims the most ingenious tortures, and, when their agony is most intolerable, whispers his proposal to them, and is always rejected. We are afraid there is no very elevated moral in all this. The question repeatedly solved in the romance seems to us not one of religion but of name. A naked proposition by a direct emissary of hell, to deliver a man from present wretchedness on the terms of his suffering worse anguish to all eternity, is an experiment not on the religious tendencies of the heart, but on its mere strength to bear present pain as balanced against its capability to anticipate future agonies. Men neglect their salvation not from a calm choice of present delight and endless wo, in preference to self denial and heaven, but from a lurking disbelief of eternal punishment, or from a vague idea of the divine mercy, or from an intention to repent at a future period, or from utter thoughtlessness of all beyond the grave; and if those refuges can be taken from them; if things unseen can be forced on their thoughts as assured realities; if they can be made to feel that in committing wilful sin they do, in effect, make the terrible election to which our author refers; the best moral result may be expected. But is there one step gained towards this end by the wild fiction of “Melmoth?” Needs “a ghost come from the grave to tell us” that if Satan were so infatuated as to tempt by a distinct proposition, of which everlasting wo was a part, he would be rejected? The position is even put as a truism by the author, who writes four volumes to expound it. A metaphysician might as well compose a folio to demonstrate that whatever is is, or an adept in mathematics attempt to show in a thousand ways that a part is less than the whole!

A moral, in its technical sense, is not, however, necessary to a good romance. When obtrusively forced on the reader,

it defeats its own purpose; and when merely deduced at the end, produces no effect at all. If admiration is excited by excellence, whether suffering or triumphant—if the heart is touched by noble pity—if the mind is enriched with pure images and lofty thoughts, the tale is truly moral, though no one precept is lectured on through its pages, or forced into its conclusion. We are afraid this praise cannot be rendered to the volume before us. Nothing vicious is ever recommended or palliated by its author; but its evil consists in the terrible anatomy of vice—in the exhibition of supernatural depravity—in the introduction of blasphemous expressions, though they are introduced to be hated. Alas! the pollutions of the imagination too soon find their way to the heart “out of which are the issues of life.” The best purity is that of him who thinks no evil. The very sentiment of peculiar detestation fixes black thoughts on the memory—the soul recurs to them with a kind of morbid curiosity, till they grow familiar to it, and lose their horror. Mr. Maturin has not only put appropriate blasphemies into the mouth of his fiend, but has himself too often borrowed illustrations from objects which ought to be shut out from the soul as infected merchandize from a city. We will not stigmatize those instances, as some of them may appear to deserve, because our allusions would assist the evil, and because we believe the author to be entirely innocent of an intention to seduce or to defile. His besetting tendency as an author, is a love of strength and novelty in thought and expression, for which he appears willing to make any sacrifice. He will ransack the forgotten records of time, or the dusty museums of natural history, to discover a new horror. He is a passionate connoisseur in agony. His taste for strong emotion evidently hurries him on almost without the concurrence of the will, so that we can scarcely help thinking that his better nature must be now and then shocked, when he calmly peruses his own works. We entreat him, when he is about to unveil some dreadful enormity to the gaze of the world, to reflect on that principle which he has so finely developed in his own *Montorio*, that evil thoughts repeated even to shuddering souls, may stain and fascinate them forever!

Melmoth is not so properly a tale as a series of tales, very inartificially connected, but relating to the agency of the same being, and having the same purpose. The work opens in the year 1816—a period some-

what too recent for the advent of an emissary of Satan—with the visit of John Melmoth a student in the university of Dublin, to the mansion of his dying uncle. The uncle is actually sinking into the grave from terror occasioned by the sight of one of his ancestors in palpable form, whose portrait hangs in a chamber of the mansion. After his death, his nephew and heir burns the portrait and discovers a manuscript in the same room to which he had been directed by his expiring relative. This manuscript relates to the attempts of the original of the portrait, also named John Melmoth, who lived in 1646, to win the soul of an Englishman, named Stanton, thirty years after his own apparent decease. Young Melmoth is himself visited twice by this fearful being, but is not subjected to his tortures or his proposals. In a dreadful tempest he rescues a Spanish gentleman, who narrates to him his history. Out of this history, which refers to the same being, and which runs almost to the end of the work, other stories arise of a similar character. The Spaniard, flying from the inquisition, finds shelter in the terrible hiding place of a Jew, who gives him a manuscript to read, containing another narrative of the stranger's wanderings. This narrative is, in its course, interrupted by two other parenthetical stories, which the stranger himself tells to the father of one of his intended victims. The first narrative, which includes all the rest, is never completed at all; but the work concludes with an actual visit of the wanderer to his descendant and the Spaniard, and his final disappearance from the earth. This arrangement, which it is difficult even clearly to explain, is unfavourable to the interest of the whole; but its defect is of the less consequence, as the tale rather claims to be regarded as an exhibition of power, than attempts to create any feeling of its reality in the reader. The general idea of a being in human shape, who lives from generation to generation, bears a resemblance to St. Leon; but the feelings excited by the two works have nothing in common. The novel of Godwin is a piece of genuine humanity; for the hero, though immortal, has all the loves, passions and desires of his species; and these are seen more clearly as well as in a more awful light, in the loneliness to which his destiny condemns him. The style, too, of the writers, entirely differs—that of Godwin being as simply majestic as that of Maturin is wild, excursive and fanciful.

We cannot give a minute analysis of the

various processes by which Melmoth endeavours to seduce his victims. Suffice it to say, that Stanton is assailed amidst the horrors of a mad-house—the Spaniard in the cells of the inquisition—one of the objects of temptation amidst a starving family—another by the side of a girl sunk in idiocy—and the last, a most beautiful girl, whom the stranger had married, and who had borne him a child, in the dungeon, where her infant is about to be taken from her forever. All the tales are full of terrible pictures, which exhibit a power like that of Salvator. In the first tale, there is a view of a receptacle for lunatics, most appalling, and yet, amidst its terrors, displaying traits of nature which are really and tearfully affecting. The Spaniard's story includes a short tale of the punishment of two lovers detected in a convent, who were closed up in a small recess, and there left to perish. It is told by the wretch who watched from choice at the outside, and heard the progress of their agony, in language which we shudder to recal. The tale of the lady who marries the fiend, sets out very beautifully with a description of a forsaken Indian isle, where the girl had been left in infancy, and had grown up in utter solitude, but amidst nature's choicest luxuries. All the rest, however, is too revolting to be dwelt on. A picture of starvation in the story of Walberg is also frightful. One of its incidents is a son snatching food from his father, who is half unconsciously devouring more than his portion; after which we are told, that the father "rose from his seat, and with horrid, unnatural face, tore the untasted meal from his grandchildren's lips, and swallowed it himself, while his swelled and toothless mouth grinned at them in mockery at once infantine and malicious!" But we will endeavour to select from the work passages which our readers may peruse with almost unmingled pleasure.

(To be concluded next week.)

Poetry.

OUR BLESSED LORD.

When gath'ring clouds around I view,
And days are dark and friends are few,
On Him I lean, who not in vain
Experienc'd ev'ry human pain.
He sees my wants, allays my fears,
And courts and treasures all my tears.
If aught should tempt my feet to stray
From heav'nly Virtue's nearest way—
To fly the good I would pursue,
And do the ill I would not do;

Still He who felt temptation's pow'r
Shall guard me in that dang'rous hour.
When anxious thoughts within me rise,
And sore dismay'd my spirit dies,
Yet He who once vouchsaf'd to hear
The sick'ning anguish of despair,
Shall sweetly sooth, shall gently dry,
The throbbing heart, the streaming eye.

If injur'd love my bosom swell,
Deceived by those I lov'd too well,
He shall his pitying aid bestow,
Who felt on earth severer wo:
At once betray'd, denied, and fled,
By all who shar'd his daily bread!

When sorrowing o'er some stone I bend
Which covers all that was a friend,
And from his voice, his hand, his smile,
Divides me for a little while—
Thou SAVIOUR see'st the tears I shed,
For Thou hast wept o'er Lazarus dead.

And oh! when I have safely past
Through ev'ry conflict but the last,
Still, still unchanging, watch beside
My parting couch, for Thou hast died.
Then point to realms of endless day,
And wipe the latest tear away! ANONYMOUS.

TO MY DEPARTED LOVE.

I did not forget how with thee I had peace
On the shore I now tread, and how pleasant
it seem'd;
How my eye then sought thine, and how gladly
it traced
Every glance of affection which mildly it
beamed.

The *beginning* and *end* of our loves were before
me,
And both touched a chord of the tenderest
tone;
For thy spirit then near, shed its influence o'er
me,
And told me that still *thou* wert truly mine
own.

Yes, I thought at the moment, (how dear was
the thought)
That there still was a union which death could
not break,

And if with some sorrow the feeling was fraught,
Yet even that sorrow was sweet for *thy* sake.

Thus musing on thee, every object around
Seem'd to borrow thy sweetness to make it-
self dear;

Each murmuring wave reach'd the shore with
a sound

As soft as the tone of thy voice to my ear.

The lights and the shades on the surface of ocean
Seem'd to give back the glimpses of feeling
and grace,

Which once so expressively told each emotion
Of thy innocent heart, as I gazed on thy face.

And when I looked up to the beautiful sky,
So cloudless and calm—Oh! it harmoniz'd
well

With the gentle expression that spoke in that
eye,

Ere the curtain of death on it loveliness fell!

BERNARD BARTON.

A MORAL THOUGHT.

Through groves sequester'd, dark and still,
Low vales and mossy woods among,
In silent paths the careless rill
With languid murmurs steals along.

Awhile it plays with circling sweep,
And lingering leaves its native plain—
Then pours impetuous down the steep,
And mingles with the boundless main.

Oh! let my years thus devious glide
Through silent scenes obscurely calm—
Nor wealth nor strife pollute the tide,
Nor honour's sanguinary palm.

When labour tires and pleasure palls,
Still let the stream untroubled be
As down the steep of age it falls
And mingles with eternity!

HAWKESWORTH.

Variety.

VARIOUS KINDS OF READERS.

The Slow.

Some read so slowly, that they divide
every word from that which follows, and
become not only tedious but unintelligible.
The finest composition is destroyed by this
disjointing mode of enunciation; and I
never hear such orators but I am reminded
of the antique Roman inscriptions, where
every word on the stone is separated by a
nail's head.

Bawlers.

These are persons of strong lungs and
weak intellects, and are more fitted to be
town criers than orators; and loudness,
and not articulation, seems the glory of
such self appointed heralds. It may truly
be said of such modern stentors, that they
are so loud that they cannot be heard; and
to them may be applied, in a direct sense,
the proverb, that "we cannot see the wood
for the trees." The ear of a deaf man is
more easily penetrated by distinctness
than loudness.

The Emphatic.

These readers seem afraid that the au-
dience may not understand the author,
and so they lay a stress on every word
with almost equal force; and, to use a
vulgar expression, "*hammer things into
your head.*" Such men may be said to
read always in *italics*.

The Rapid.

These gentlemen seem to wish to finish
their job as soon as they can, and would
excel, were a premium offered for expedi-
tion, in the performance of their task.
These orators sometimes, unfortunately,
are church orators; and if they are em-
ployed in more than one place of worship,

they are seen to gallop over the town with the same expedition they use in the service of the liturgy.

The Dramatic.

These persons seem to consider reading as acting; and if any dialogue lies in their way, their imitation of the characters becomes truly ridiculous, or at least, it requires the utmost judgment not to appear so, for unnatural tones must, of course, be used, and the reader's voice be put often into a masquerade.

The Careless.

These men read every thing as if they contemned the writer and his subject, "and sleep themselves to make their hearers sleep." A newspaper, a sermon, a senator's speech, are all one to them, and the frequent yawn of the reader is as frequently communicated to the audience. Swift's flapper here would be of great use.

Whisperers.

These men betray great weakness of nerves, tenuity of voice, and great modesty or shyness, and appear to be unwilling that the audience should partake of their communications. Such persons should be confined to sick rooms as envoys extraordinary between the nurse and the physician.

Monotonists.

This species of orators, more common than the rest, and often partaking of the faults of all, confound all distinctions of composition. The pathetic, the declamatory, the apostrophe, the narrative, &c. are all amalgamated into one mass. Such unvaried monotony reminds me of the churchwarden, who *beautified* a church by one regular and universal whitewash. The various colours displayed in the figures and fields of the ancient coats of arms, that adorned the walls, and gratified the ancient gentry of the neighbourhood, were all hidden in one broad and monotonous fall of snow. [New Monthly Mag.

PREFACES.

I declare myself infinitely delighted by a preface. Is it exquisitely written? no literary morsel is more delicious. Is the author inveterately dull? it is a kind of preparatory information, which may be very useful. It argues a deficiency in taste to turn over an elaborate preface unread; for it is the odour of the author's roses; every drop distilled at an immense cost. It is the reason of the reasoning, and the folly of the foolish. I agree with the Ita-

lians, who call these little pieces *La salsa del Libro*; the sauce of the book.

DR. YOUNG.

Dr. Joseph Warton says, "So little sensible are we of our own imperfections, that the very last time I saw Dr. Young, he was severely censuring and ridiculing the false pomp of fustian writers, and the nauseousness of bombast."

Sir Joshua Reynolds once observed to Dr. Johnson, that he had talked above the capacity of some people with whom they had been in company together. "No matter, sir, (said Johnson), they consider it as a compliment to be talked to as if they were wiser than they are. There is nothing more likely to betray a man into absurdity than *condescension*; when he seems to suppose his understanding too powerful for his company."

Agriculture.



"Let us cultivate the ground, that the poor, as well as the rich, may be filled; and happiness and peace be established throughout our borders."

Report of the Curators of the Philadelphia Society for promoting Agriculture on the Cultivation of Flax.

The curators taking into consideration the present distressed state of agriculture, from the extreme depression of the prices of all the products of the soil, and believing that there is no immediate prospect of a favourable change—beg leave to draw the attention of the society to an object which, in their view, well deserves the most serious consideration and strenuous exertions for its accomplishment. The experience of past years has fully established the fact, that so long as the nations of Europe remain in a state of peace, and adhere to the system of pro-

protecting the respective products of their soil from the competition of all extraneous supplies, they will continue independent of this country for all articles of subsistence; and the extent and fertility of our own soil are such, that a comparatively small portion to what is now in cultivation, will furnish abundant means for domestic consumption. The natural consequence must be, that if the soil cannot be appropriated to the cultivation of some other commodity than that of subsistence, a considerable portion now in unprofitable culture, must be abandoned and suffered to grow up in waste. The aversion of this impending calamity to the agricultural prosperity of our state, can only be effected by the development of some other resource of the soil; and every proposed improvement which has for its object the creation of a new source of wealth, claims at least a fair and full experiment.

While the products of agriculture have experienced a diminution of value so destructive to the welfare and prosperity of the middle and northern states, the sources from which the southern states derive their immense wealth remain partially unobstructed.

The cotton of the south, notwithstanding its wonderful augmentation, still finds its way to a profitable market; its consumption grows with its accelerated growth; invention has been racked, and the art and ingenuity of man have been successfully employed to apply its use, to the exclusion of almost every other article of manufacture.

The invention of the cotton gin, for separating the seed from the cotton, and the application of improved machinery to the manufacture of the raw material, have given to this article all its present value and importance; they are the great agents by which all the wonders of the cotton cultivation in the United States have been effected.

The capacity of our soil for the growth of flax cannot be questioned. The tedious and destructive process, and expensive labour, by which it has been hitherto produced in the raw material, have rendered its general cultivation wholly impracticable; and the want of machinery to manufacture it with the same facility as cotton, has deprived it of that share in the consumption of our country, which, with the removal of these difficulties, flax may justly claim. If, by modern improvements, the difficulties which have hitherto

prevented the general cultivation of flax are removed, and if by the application of machinery, the raw material can be manufactured with greater facility than cotton, a new and profitable direction is offered to the drooping industry of our country in the growth of flax, and the establishment of a useful manufacture.

The society, on receiving information that flax machines had been invented in England, for preparing flax without having recourse to the former expensive and destructive operation of dew or water rotting, and by which the labour was greatly diminished, took immediate steps to procure them. Funds were transmitted to England, and letters directed to several gentlemen in London, requesting their assistance to forward the views of the society. Owing to some difficulties in the laws of Great Britain against the exportation of new inventions, the society have not succeeded in obtaining them; but the president of the society, with his accustomed zeal, is persevering in effort, which it is confidently expected will be successful.

The flax machine now exhibited to the society, was constructed by artists of this city, on the plan of Hill & Bundy's flax machine, and is confined to the operation of breaking the flax in its dry state, and is calculated, with the labour of two boys, to break forty pounds per day. The same artists propose to construct a rubber for preparing the flax for the hackles, provided the society will afford them suitable encouragement. Other forms have been invented and tried in England for the accomplishment of the same object, with various success; and if the ingenious efforts of our own countrymen, so fruitful in invention, were attracted to this object, there is every reason to believe that still greater improvements would be effected.

The flax machines propose to effect for the culture of flax, what the cotton gin has accomplished for the cultivation of cotton. And with the accomplishment of this object, a statement of the relative expenses of the cotton and flax culture will furnish data, on which may be fairly estimated the value and importance of the cultivation of flax to our state. The product of clean cotton may be stated at an average of 250 pounds to the acre; that of flax varies from 200 to 600 pounds, and may be rated at an average of 300 pounds to the acre. We have taken our

estimate of the average quantity per acre of our flax culture, from the produce of an acre according to the old mode of rotting and dressing: but it will be seen in the English publications, that the new mode of dressing by machines, increases the quantity so as to double it, and the strength of the fibre is perfect: so that, instead of getting a sixth part of the whole plant rotted, one-third is the general produce of the operation by the machines, which prepare the flax without the delay and risk of dew or water rotting. The expense and labour of pulling the flax are much less than picking the cotton, which requires the constant application of a force for a period of four months. Flax does not require a more expensive tillage than wheat, to insure a good crop, and when pulled green, and while the seed is soft in the capsule, is less exhausting to the soil, and may be advantageously substituted for any other crop, in any proposed system of rotation. Flax, when broke in the dry state, yields a considerable quantity of offal or chaff, which, together with the seed in its imperfect state, form a most nutritious article of food for cattle. Flax has been hitherto cultivated in this country principally with a view to the profit of the seed, and hence the fibre has been coarse and harsh, but when pulled green, its quality is greatly improved. When the same attention shall be bestowed on the culture of flax, that has been devoted to the cultivation of grain, and the same care adopted in the selection of the best seed, a still further improvement in the quality, and increase in the quantity of the product, may be confidently calculated on.

In addition to all the advantages which the invention of flax machines afford to the cultivation of flax, the curators have ascertained, that there is at present in operation, in the vicinity of Frankford, machinery for spinning flax with greater facility than can be accomplished by machinery in spinning cotton. Agreeably to the statement of the proprietor of this machinery, made to the curators at their request, and submitted to the society—"the expense of attending one frame of 24 spindles, and preparing the flax (except hackling) is thirty-three cents per day, and the average quantity of yarn is about 24 pounds per day, or one pound of yarn to the spindle per day, equal to the production of one spindle for cotton per week."

The extension of the flax culture by increasing the supply, will afford encouragement to the manufacture of it, and the manufacture will reciprocate equal encouragement to its cultivation, by enlarging the demand. The great consumption of our country of articles of which flax is the material, has been made exclusively subservient to the productive labour and wealth of foreign countries; and deriving all the benefits of that consumption, they have studiously encouraged the growth of flax, and protected the manufacture of it by large bounties. How important is it then, that we should avail ourselves of improvements calculated to render us independent of all foreign supply of this important article in the consumption of our country, and to give to our own industry all the advantages to be derived from the cultivation and manufacture of flax. If these advantages have not been overrated, it is a subject of great national importance; and if the legislature of our state were properly impressed with its bearing on the general interests of agriculture, they might be induced to afford encouragement adequate to the accomplishment of the object.

The curators offer these suggestions to the society with a view to draw their attention to the importance of the flax cultivation to the interests of agriculture, and induce them to adopt all the means within their power to give the flax machines a full and fair experiment, and to afford to them the benefits of any improvements of which they may be susceptible. Our country is indebted to native invention for the cotton gin, which has given so much value to the cultivation of cotton; and if the inventive faculties of our countrymen could be directed to the improvement of the flax machines, by offering suitable encouragement, there is every reason to calculate on final success. The wonderful improvements of modern times in all labour saving machinery, and the eminent instances of success in invention, would justify the opinion, that discovery on any given subject, may be confidently sought. And on this account, the offer of a premium, or even simply a topic for investigation, is often of national benefit. The funds of the society can never be appropriated to a more useful purpose, than offering premiums for useful inventions adapted to prescribed ends. And what end can be proposed of greater

magnitude to the interests of agriculture, than that which, if accomplished, is calculated to furnish a new resource from the soil, to give value to industry, and afford assurance to the farmer, that he shall no longer be compelled to toil in vain, and waste his vigour and strength in unprofitable labour. The curators respectfully recommend to the society to offer a premium to the person who shall make and exhibit to the society, on or before the first day of January next, the most perfect machines for preparing flax in the raw material, without having recourse to the former process of dew or water rotting, and by which the labour and expense of preparing it will be essentially diminished.

Published by order of the society,

STEPHEN DUNCAN,
JAMES M. BROOM,
ISAAC C. JONES,
REUBEN HAINES,
JOSEPH R. PAXSON,
Curators.

At a stated meeting of the "*Philadelphia Society for promoting Agriculture*," held on the 20th of February, 1821,

It was resolved, that a PREMIUM OF TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS be offered to the person, who shall exhibit to the society, the most perfect machines for dressing and preparing flax, without DEW or WATER ROTTING, on or before the first of January next.

The society reserves the right of distributing the premium in whole, or in part, according as it shall deem the machines to have merit; and also to give any proportion thereof to the person who shall exhibit any one of the machines competent to perform the operation required.

The machines to be approved of by the society, before awarding the premium, which may be entirely withheld, if the society shall deem such machines not to have sufficient merit.

RICHARD WISTAR, jun.

Assistant Secretary.

Frankford, 2d Mo. 16th, 1821.

Respected Friend—I have received thy note of 14th instant, on behalf of the Philadelphia Society for promoting Agriculture. I applaud their endeavours to pro-

mote the cultivation of flax, and hope the manufacturing of it may also claim their attention. I shall willingly communicate what information I can on the subject. I have only had one spinning frame (or thras-sel) in operation, which has produced a profit equal to my expectations; the quality of the yarn may be ascertained by examining the enclosed sample; finer yarns may be spun of flax of finer quality, suitable for sewing thread, &c. The expense of attending one frame of 24 spindles, and preparing the flax (except hatchelling), is 33 cents per day; the average quantity of yarn is about 24 pounds, or one pound per spindle per day, equal to the production of one spindle for cotton per week. The machinery is constructed on the most improved English plan, and I am doubtful of the practicability of making any material improvement in the construction. I am, respectfully, thy friend,

JOSIAH CHAPMAN.

STEPHEN DUNCAN, esq.

P.S. This kind of flax machinery was first erected in the United States in the year 1808, by George Brown, and has been in operation since that time, in manufacturing twine, shoe yarn, sewing thread, sail duck, bedtick, sheeting, webbing, and from the w bagging ditto for baling, cotton carpet wo, and filling wrapping yarn and candlewic &c.

The number of spindles in the state of New York 1162; in New Jersey about 600; a part which were erected by a Frenchman, at are differently constructed: all those in New Jersey are manufacturing sail duck the United States navy on my plan. In Pennsylvania there are only 96 spindles, the whole of which will be in operation in the course of next year.

To Correspondents.

JUVENIS, T. the IMITATION OF ARMSTRONG, and the MINT REPORT, are intended for our next.

TERMS OF PUBLICATION.

Subscriptions to the National Recorder may commence at any time, though it is desirable that they should begin with a volume: they may be withdrawn at the close of any volume, provided notice be sent before any part of the next volume shall have been forwarded. Payment to be made in July of each year for the whole year. Such as begin with the second volume of any year, to pay for that volume on the first of January following. When not otherwise stipulated at the time of subscribing, it is understood that the paper is to be forwarded till an order be sent for its discontinuance.

Patent Machine Paper of J. & T. Gilpin, Brandywine.

Clark & Raser, Printers.